



GCD LOVES, MANUELS

CLAREMONT, ANDERSON

X-MEN



GOD LOVES, MANUELS

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asked of writers?

Answer: Where do you get your ideas?

From here, the colloquy can turn profound, sublime or (very often) just plain silly, as betokened by the standard writer's response, "the Idea Bank in Poughkeepsie." You'd be amazed how many folks would subsequently call 4-1-1 and try to get the number ("Is that a 'savings bank' or a 'national bank'?") See? Silly. I told you. All of this is to disguise the fundamental reality of our craft, which is that we all start with ourselves, and a blank sheet of paper (or a blank display screen). Our task is to fill that page with words, ideas, a story. The $\;\;\;$ a backlash from the heartland to the unpatriotic tools we employ to that end are our imagination and hedonistic attitudes and mores of the '60s and our craft. But it starts with that empty page. What gets you going? There's no set answer. Sometimes it can be a primal visual image, or a notion prompted by a conversation, the news, the soup you had for lunch; anything and everything can provide inspiration. (That also includes the need to pay the mortgage, or the reality—in comics, anyway—that a penciler is dependent on your productivity to pay his bills.) Sadly, many of those seeds fall on fallow ground, or they sprout ideas that start out promisingly but wither and fade. The idea itself is the ten-percent inspiration; the hammering it into a viable, successful, memorable story is the ninety-percent perspiration that follows.

So—where did this story, this particular graphic The vision that many of these ministries novel, come from?

very different place almost two decades ago.

The industry, which had been in what we all thought was a terminal decline only a few years previously, was exploding both commercially and creatively. Everywhere you turned, there were new talents, new formats, new concepts. It felt like a revolution, both in terms of the stories being told and the means we had to tell them. There was no need to restrict ourselves to the classic paradigm of costumed super heroes, portrayed in monthly 22-page serial increments. We could tell stories in a longer form; we could pitch concepts that were "outside the box," including those that were creator-owned as opposed to the more traditional work-for-hire. For the first time, there was a growing sense that comics, like mainstream publishing, could be approached as a partnership between creators and publishers, with both sides equitably sharing the risks of publishing and the potential rewards. One of the engines driving that change, certainly at Marvel, was the X-Men. I mean, who'd'a thought—that this title, resurrected as a mid-list bimonthly only a few years before, would quickly become the commercial benchmark by which the field would supreme deity but also, by extension, in the be measured? Somehow, this was the right title. at the right time, for the right audience. But that's shoptalk. What about the world in which we

Pop guiz: What's the guestion most commonly appeared? I came into comics at the tail end of the '60s, gleefully embracing the fast-paced, irreverent, hyper-emotional story model that had been established by Stan Lee and continued (so ably in terms of the X-Men) by Roy Thomas. In those days, since all of us figured the business didn't have long to last, there was a very strong sense that "anything goes." We didn't have to worry about "established continuity"; the Marvel Universe we were playing in was so young that we were creating most of that continuity.

> So here we are in the early 1980s. Ronald Reagan is president and a wave of creative conservatism is sweeping the nation, pitched as and '70s. According to them, the country was returning to bedrock, traditional values and beliefs, both political and moral. Leading that charge—and by extension, the avalanche of criticism of the prevalent "lefty" "New York/LA" lifestyles—were a coterie of TV evangelists. trumpeting their born-again, fundamentalist vision of the Bible across the national airwaves. There were the long-established ministries of Billy Graham, Oral Roberts and Robert Shuler (sic), plus their newer counterparts such as Pat Robertson (the 700 Club), Jerry Falwell (the Moral Majority), Jimmy Swaggart, and Jim and Tammy Fave Bakker (the PTL Club), among many others.

espoused was pure and focused. The Bible was the font of wisdom, it was the path to Marvel, and the comics industry itself, was a salvation, not only for the souls of the individual parishioners, but through those individuals for the nation itself. Theirs was a creed that offered what was presented as a more vital and viable and relevant alternative to the traditional denominations. Regrettably to me (and here, I'm afraid, this piece becomes somewhat personal), it also seemed from an outsider's perspective to be increasingly exclusionary. Other faiths, other branches of the same faith, sounded as if they were being dismissed, which carried disturbing echoes of the growing fundamentalist movement that was sweeping the Islamic world. Despite acknowledgments from the ministries in various public forums of the need for tolerance, and the recognition that America is a pluralistic society, there remained—to my ears, at least—an underlying sense of "my way, or the highway." You either accepted the Word of God wholly and unreservedly, or you didn't, and if you didn't, you were damned. At the same time, these ministries were beginning to advance a broad-based social and political agenda, hoping to reshape the national landscape in terms of their faith. Now, we're talking primal structures here. We're talking about faith, not only in a ministers who present those beliefs to their congregations. Here we have ministers asking some might say, requiring—absolute trust from lived, the background against which these stories their congregations, absolute belief that what is

are being asked to follow is just and righteous. This is a weapon of extraordinary power, as was demonstrated not only by the actions of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, but most absolutely by the actions of Christ himself. And yet, these ministers are only human, and to be human is to be fallible. In every war that's ever been fought, ministers on both sides have called for victory in the name of God, have stated that God is on their side. But if both sides believe in the same God, which one is correct?

Mutants in the Marvel Universe have always stood as a metaphor for the underclass, the outsiders; they represent the ultimate minority. Suppose, I began to wonder, a man of faith for what he considered the most righteous of reasons and in perfect consistency with his Manichaean perception of the world—put forward the proposition that mutants are creatures of the Devil. There is good and there is evil, and mutants by the very fact of their existence fall into the latter category. That they are not human, that they are a threat to the hegemony of God's Chosen (i.e., what we now call baseline humanity), that their very existence is an affront to God's plan for the world. Suppose he chose to act on those beliefs? Ours is celebrated as a secular society. We are a nation "under God," but the definition of what "God" represents is left open. It is, I have always believed, meant to embrace a broad spectrum of faiths, whether held by a single individual or by tens of millions. How then do we reconcile the beliefs of one group of citizens with those of another? How do we subordinate—or can we, or should we-the commitments required by those faiths to the necessities of living in a pluralistic hegemony?

For me, this story grew out of a time where voices of casual intolerance were very much abroad in the land, where espousing views that stood apart from what was considered the "mainstream" could have serious and lasting consequences. In William Stryker, I wanted to create a man of faith whose sincerity could not be questioned. He is true in his beliefs, but those beliefs have led him down a path that could have terrible and lasting repercussions for a significant segment of the populace. In the X-Men are people of many cultures and different faiths—Nightcrawler is a staunch Catholic, Kitty Pryde, a Jew-yet that aspect of their lives is completely overshadowed by what is for Stryker the seminal reality of their existence: They are mutants. Nothing else is of consequence.

When I wrote the story, I read my Bible cover to cover, more than once-which I hadn't done since college—and I still have the dog-eared and heavily annotated copy on my bookshelf. In traveling the country, I spend Sunday after Sunday listening to media ministers both local and national. The graphic novel as it evolved grew into a plea that, no matter what the

being asked of them is true, that the cause they dictates of faith, we must all be bound by our conscience as individuals. That to me is the nature of free will. We come to a point of choice, both in terms of our faith as moral beings and our lives as good citizens. For some, actions in a civil arena grow from their faith, like a tree from a sapling; for others, the reverse—their actions in a societal sense must stand in opposition to tenets of their faith.

> William Stryker acted from his own perception of his faith. Yet at the same time, the people he was acting against were also-and remainpeople of faith themselves. Is Nightcrawler's faith in the divine any less valid because Stryker believes him a creature of the Devil? And if Nightcrawler's faith is valid and true, what then of Stryker's condemnation?

> Are we all, in some manner or shape or form, children of God? Or are some of us perhaps more beloved than others? Therein, for me, lay the crux of the conflict in the graphic novel, one that lasts to this day. Faith lies at the most fundamental core of our being as sentient creatures, this need to believe in something greater than ourselves, this almost inherent acknowledgment of the miracle of creation. But as faith is personal and unique to us as individuals, so then must also be our acceptance of responsibility for those actions that derive from it. Because in the end, while we remain individuals, we reside in a community. For the community to thrive, we need to find ways to get along, to play nice with one another. We need to cherish that which binds us, and accept with a measure of tolerance some of the things that make us different.

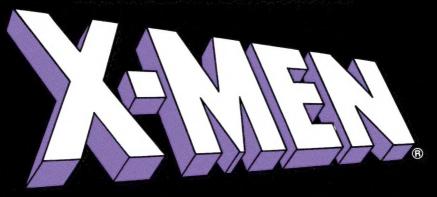
> Why was this story written? What makes it special? Ultimately, I think, it grew out of two quotes that pretty much defined my own adolescence. One was from Martin Luther King, one of his most celebrated lines, which I've used myself in describing my approach to the X-Men: "I dream of a world where my children and their grandchildren will be judged, not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." The other, from Ted Kennedy, eulogizing his murdered brother, Robert: "Some dream of things that never were and say, why? I dream of things that are yet to be and say, why not?"

> The irony of God Loves is that it was very much of its time and place, and yet, almost twenty years later, the sentiments—and the inspirations that brought it into being-retain their relevance. People are still judged more by the color of their skin, and the nation of their origin, and the faith they espouse, than their character. And I still find myself dreaming of a time when all of that is behind us and saying, why not?

Chris Claremont Brooklyn, New York March 2003



STAN LEE PRESENTS A MARVEL GRAPHIC NOVEL



GOD LOVES, MAN KILLS

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published by THE MARVEL COMICS GROUP 387 Park Avenue South New York, New York 10016 ISBN: 0-939766-22-1 With thanks to Mary Jo Duffy for her invaluable assistance and criticism.
—Chris Claremont









"SUBJECTS: THE UNCANNY X-MEN, A TEAM OF SO-CALLED SUPERHEROES, WHOSE MEMBERSHIP CONSISTS EXCLUSIVELY OF MUTANTS, PEOPLE BORN WITH EXTRAORDINARY POWERS AND ABILITIES. CURRENTLY, THERE ARE SIX.

"CYCLOPS-- CAPABLE OF PROJECTING FORCE BEAMS FROM HIS EYES. "STORM -- A SELF-STYLED PAGAN GODDESS, POSSESSING THE ABILITY TO MANIPULATE THE WEATHER. "WOLVERINE-- FORMER CANADIAN SECRET AGENT, HIS SKELETON IS LACED WITH ADAMANTIUM, MAKING IT VIRTUALLY UNBREAKABLE.







"COLOSSUS-- WHO CAN TRANSFORM HIS BODY FROM FLESH AND BLOOD- "ARIEL -- ABLE TO PHASE HER BODY THROUGH SOLID OBJECTS. "NIGHTCRAWLER-- IN ADDITION TO EXCEPTIONAL ACROBATIC SKILLS AND THE ABILITY TO CLING TO WALLS AND CEILINGS...













MUCH LONGER.



73 WILLINGDON ROAD, IN THE SUBURBAN TOWN OF SALEM CENTER, WHERE FORMER PRIMA BALLERINA STEVIE HUNTER MAINTAINS BOTH HOME AND DANCE STUDIO









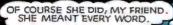












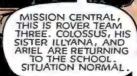






SHE ISN'T A MUTANT, PARTNER. LEAVE HER BE.

SHE'S WORSE ---SHE TREATS THOSE MUTIE SCUM LIKE REAL HUMAN BEINGS OUR MISSION'S SURVEILLANCE, NOT ASSASSINATION. BE PATIENT, GEORGE--ONCE WE'VE DEALT WITH THE MUTIES, THERE'LL BE PLENTY OF TIME FOR TRAITORS LIKE HER.



OPERATION
HEADHUNTER
CAN PROCEED
AS SCHEDULED



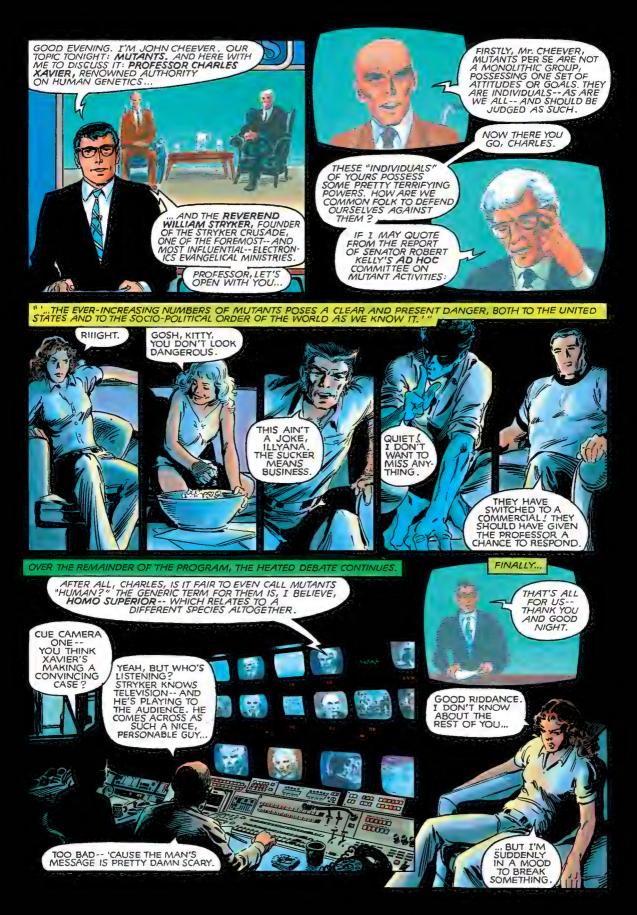
























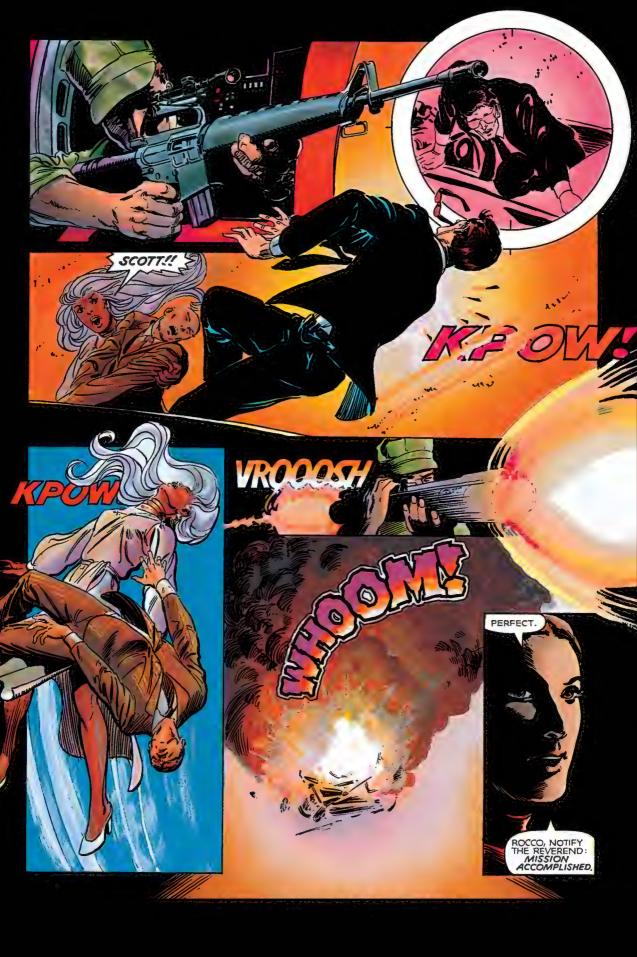
















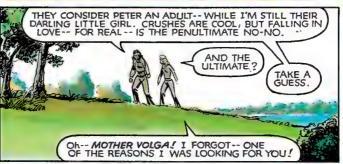
























IT'S A CON. SOMEONE WENT TO A HELLUVA LOT OF TROUBLE TO CONVINCE THE LAW--AND US--THAT CHARLEY, SCOTT AN' RORO WERE KILLED IN A CAR CRASH.











LET'S NAIL THE BASTARDS.



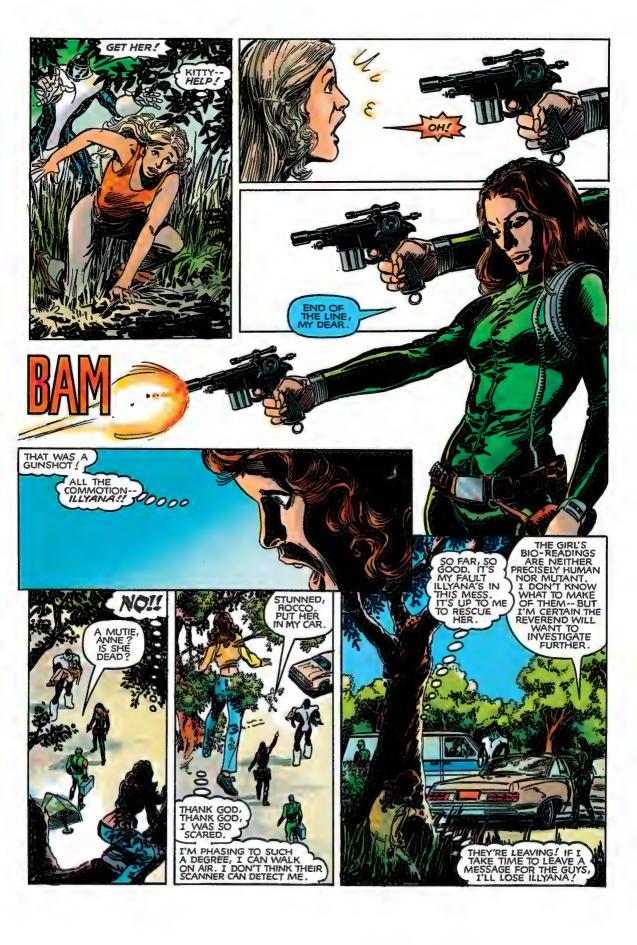




















































DAMN! WE NEARLY HAD HIM THAT TIME.

> STATUS REPORT UPDATE: SUBJECT SUSPENDED IN ISOLATION TANK, UNDER TOTAL SENSORY DEPRIVATION...



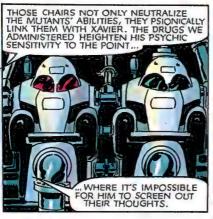




















HE LOOKS AT THE TWO X-MEN AND TIME AND MEMORY SUDDENLY, LINEXPECTEDLY, TURN BACK LINEON THEMSELVES, TO A SIMPLER DAY, THIRTY YEARS GONE.

"THERE WAS NO CRUSADE,
THEN." HE REMEMBERS, "I
WASN'T EVEN A MINISTER.
OUITE THE OPPOSITE MASTER.
SERGEANT WILLIAM STRYKER,
U.S. ARMY RANGERS.- A
TOUGH- AS- NAILS, HELL- RAISING
PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER, ON
SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT TO THE
MILITARY NUCLEAR TEST
PROGRAM. THE BRASS TOLD
US THE DANGER WAS MINIMAL.
WE BELIEVED THEM.

"WHEN MY TOUR WAS OVER, MY WIFE MARCY AND I HEADED SOUTH--TO VISIT MY FAMILY IN PHOENIX.



"ALONE, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NEVADA DESERT, I DELIVERED MY SON.



"HE-- IT-- WAS A MONSTER!





FACED
WITH THAT
ABOMINATION,
I DID WHAT
HAD TO BE
DONE.

"AND WHEN MARCY, HALF-UNCONSCIOUS, ASKED FOR HER BABY...



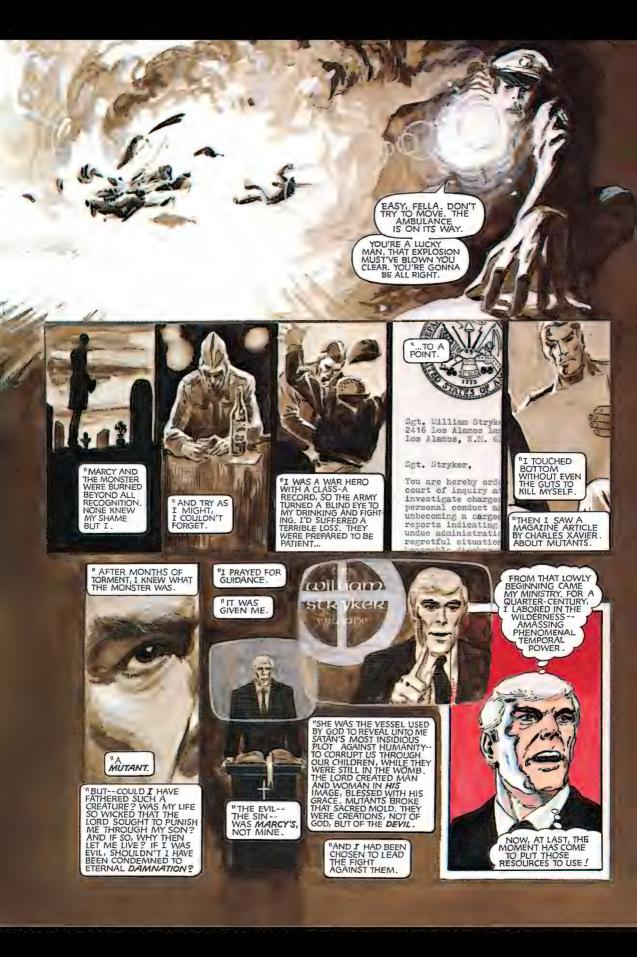
"... I TOOK HER IN MY ARMS, HELD HER CLOSE.



"THE CAR HAD BEEN LEAKING GAS SINCE THE CRASH-- IT WAS A MIRACLE THERE'D BEEN NO EXPLO-SION. I PLANNED TO CHANGE THAT. I PLACED MARCY INSIDE THE WRECK, HER... BADY IN HER ARMS. I CLIMBED IN BESIDE HER...



"... AND LIT A MATCH.





























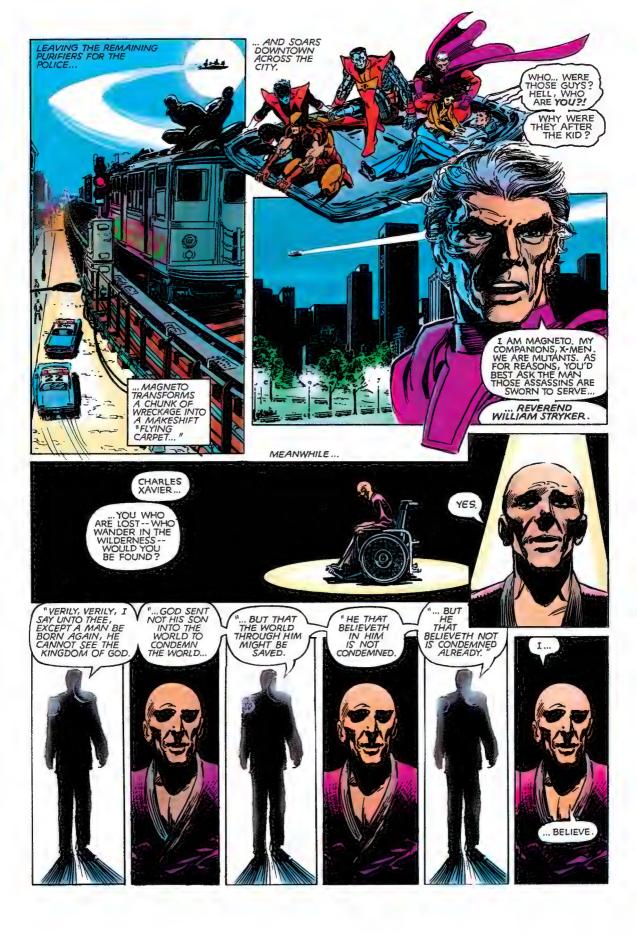


















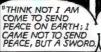












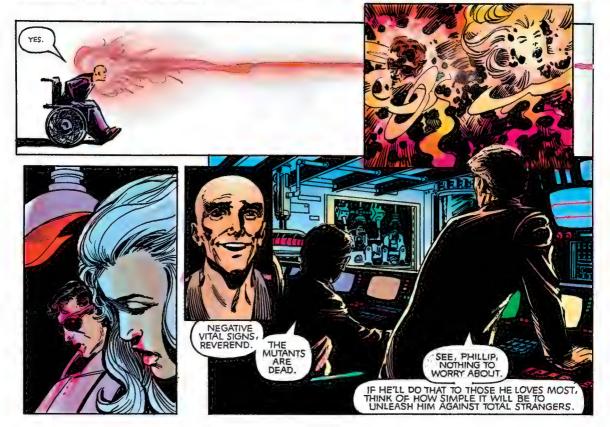


"FOR I AM COME TO SET A MAN AT VARIANCE AGAINST HIS FATHER...



"...HE THAT LOVETH SON OR DAUGHTER MORE THAN ME IS NOT WORTHY OF ME.























ELSEWHERE ...





RELAX, PUN'KIN. THEY AREN'T. WOLVERINE, THE DOCTOR ...

...IS AN IDIOT! HE
BELIEVES HIS FLAMIN'
MACHINES. I SAY THEY'RE
WRONG. MY SENSES TELL
ME SCOTT-'N'-'RORO
ARE ALIVE ...

...IN SOME KIND'A STASIS. A HEFTY JOLT OF ELECTRICITY MIGHT REVIVE 'EM.







Chapter 4

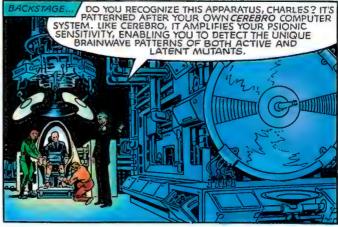
THIS IS JOHN CHEEVER,
ABC NEWS, REPORTING FROM
NEW YORK'S FAMED MADISON
SOUARE GARDEN-- WHERE
WITHIN THE HOUR REVEREND
WILLIAM STRYKER WILL GIVE
WHAT IS BEING HERALDED
AS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT
SERMON OF HIS MINISTRY.

INVITATIONS HAVE BEEN SENT TO EVERY MAJOR NATIONAL POLITICAL FIGURE-OF BOTH PARTIES-- AND THE FEW REFUSALS ARE ELOQUENT TESTAMENT TO THE CRUSADE'S CLOUT.



IT IS ONE THING, THEY
NOTE, TO CRITICIZE GOVERNMENT POLICY AND THE MORAL
STATE OF THE NATION, QUITE
ANOTHER TO SINGLE OUT A
SPECIFIC GROUP OF PEOPLE AND.
BRAND THEM AS LITERALLY LESS
THAN HUMAN. TO MANY, IT
BETOKENS AN ATTITUDE
UNCOMFORTABLY REMINISCENT
OF THAT HELD IN NAZI
GERMANY AGAINST THE JEWS.

























BEHIND THE PODIUM, A SWITCH IS THROWN, THE PSI-SCAN DEVICE ACTIVATED.







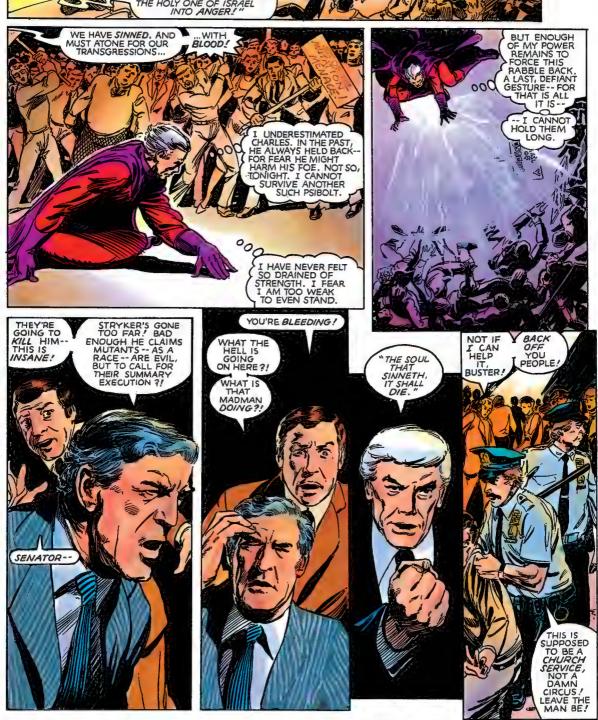
















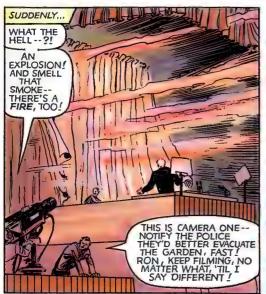
















I'M AFRAID
A DOUBLE
'PORT WON'T BE
PLEASANT.

I'VE RIDDEN
THIS RIDE
BEFORE,
REMEMBER?

READY WHEN YOU ARE, ELF.

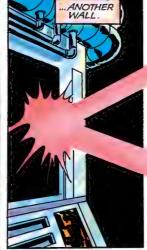


































THE MAN WAS BEATEN. HIS CAUSE LIVES ON. ALREADY, IT'S BEING SAID THAT STRYKER'S GOAL WAS RIGHT, ONLY HIS METHODS FLAWED. NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU TRY, YOU CANNOT TRULY WIN.



I HAVE
NEVER HEARD
THAT TONE
OF VOICE
FROM YOU
BEFORE,
PROFESSOR.

ARE YOU
TELLING
SHOULD
JOIN
MAGNETO?
PROFESSOR.

WHY NOT? I HAVE SPENT MY LIFE SMASHING MY HEAD AGAINST A WALL THAT REFUSES TO BE BROKEN. PERHAPS IT'S TIME I--WE--FOUND A BETTER WAY.

STRYKER MADE ME A KILLER, EVEN THOUGH NO ONE ACTUALLY DIED, THE INTENT WAS THERE!



BUT DON'T YOU SEE -- EITHER OF YOU -- WE'RE-HUMAN, TOO! A DIFFERENT BRANCH, PERHAPS, BUT THE SAME BASIC TREE! SUCH A FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT IN ATTITUDE CAN'T BE IMPOSED-- TO HAVE ANY MEANING, IT MUST GROW FROM WITHIN.

I SWORE LONG
AGO THAT I
WOULD SEE NO
MORE X-MEN DIE.
IF MAGNETO'S
IS THE ONLY
MEANS TO
THAT END...

"THEN
SO BE IT.

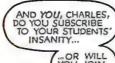
GRANTED, TIMES
ARE TOUGH FOR
ARE AND THEY'LL
PROBABLY GET
A LOT WORSE.
GRANTED, WE
PROBABLY COULD
COMPANDED
THE COST IN BLOOD
WOULD BE STAGGERING

Enth All NW

YOU BROUGHT US
TOGETHER TO FULFILL A
DREAM, CHARLES-- ONE BORN
OUT OF HOPE AND THE NOBLEST
OF HUMAN ASPIRATIONS--AND
WE'VE SWEATED AND BLED,
AND SOME OF US HAVE DIED,
TO MAKE IT A REALITY. I'M
NOT PREPARED TO
GIVE UP.

THE MEANS ARE
AS IMPORTANT AS THE
END -- WE HAVE TO DO
THIS RIGHT OR NOT AT
ALL. ANYTHING LESS
NEGATES EVERY BELIEF
WE'VE EVER HAD, EVERY
SACRIFICE WE'VE
EVER MADE.



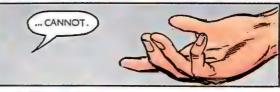
















WILL BE MY TURN.





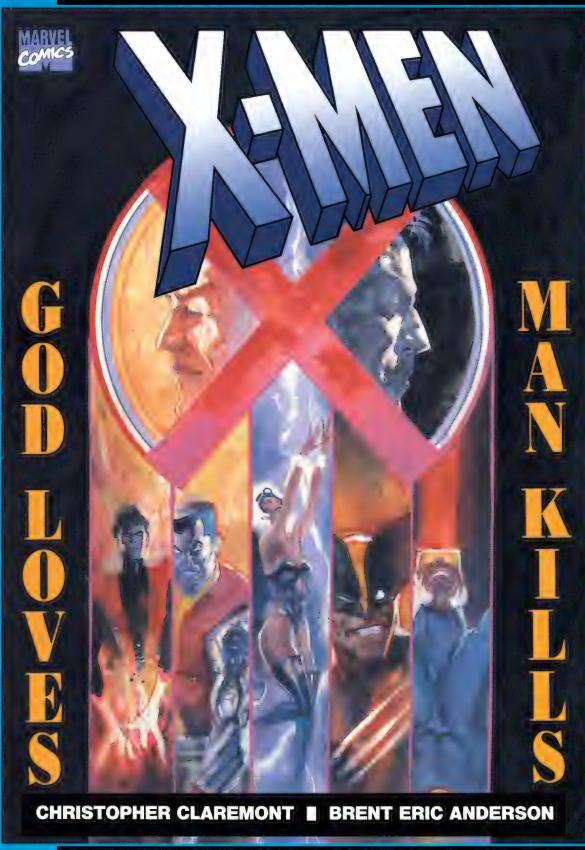


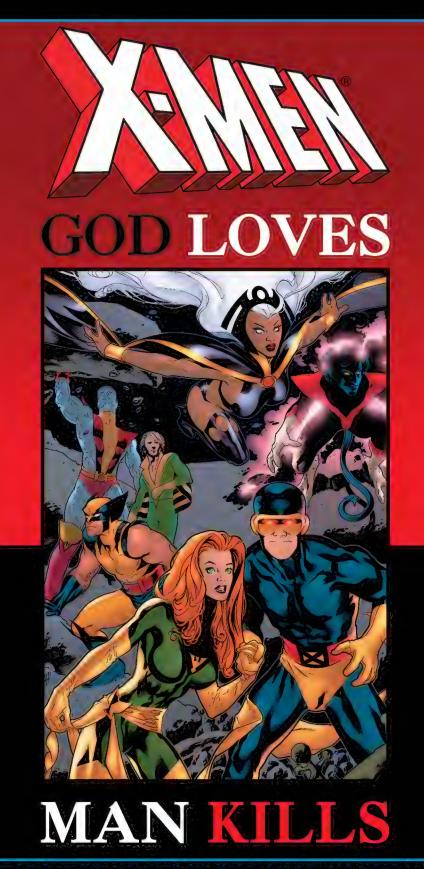
Mutants—ordinary people, gifted with a unique X-factor in their genetic make-up giving them extraordinary abilities—are all around us. While some use these powers for unspeakable evil, others like the mutant outlaws known as the Uncanny X-Men have honed their awesome abilities and pledged them in the service of mankind!



But when the very people they have sworn to protect turn against them, the X-Men must bond together against their greatest threat; the battle against the fear and hatred of the anti-mutant movement. It is a fight that will cost them dearly, and one they may not win.

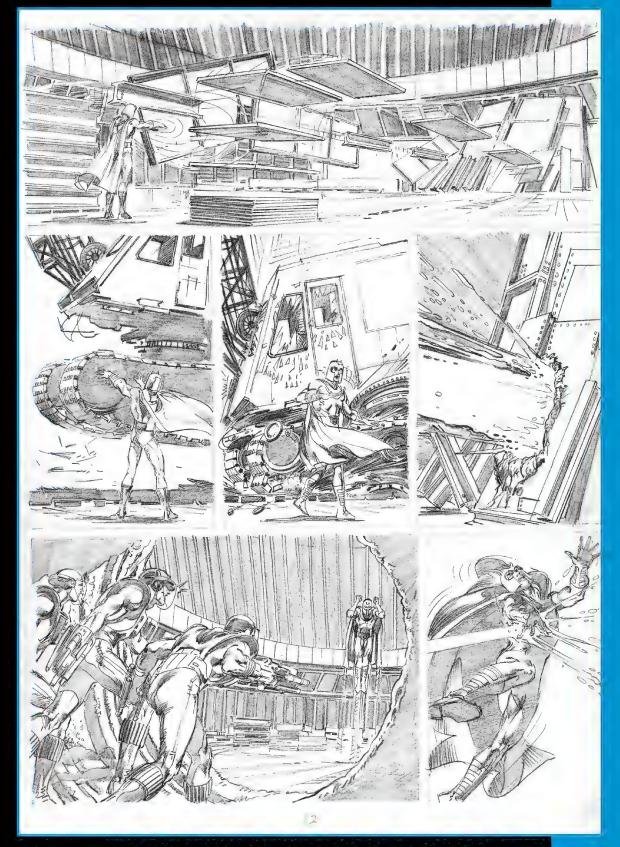
ISBN: 0-939766-22-1







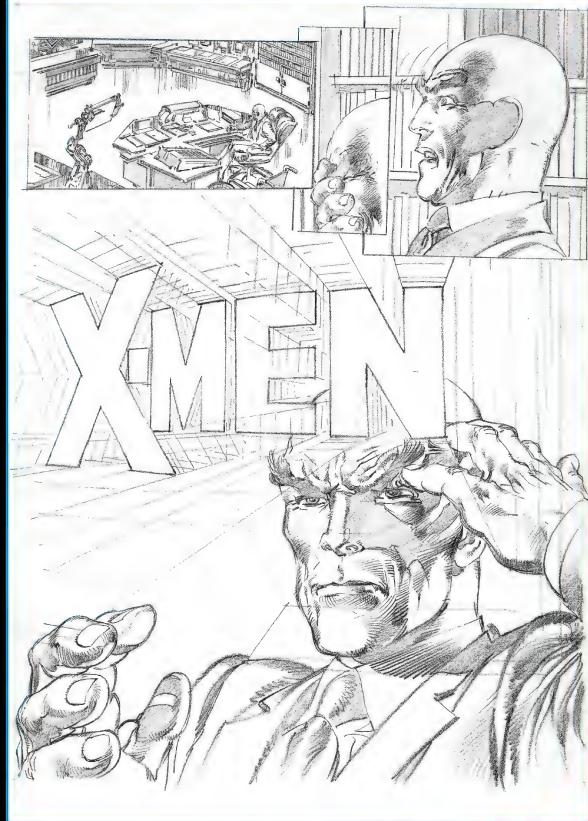
NEAL ADAMS WAS THE ORIGINAL ARTIST ASSIGNED TO X-MEN: GOD LOVES. MAN KILLS AND DREW SIX PAGES BEFORE LEAVING THE PROJECT.

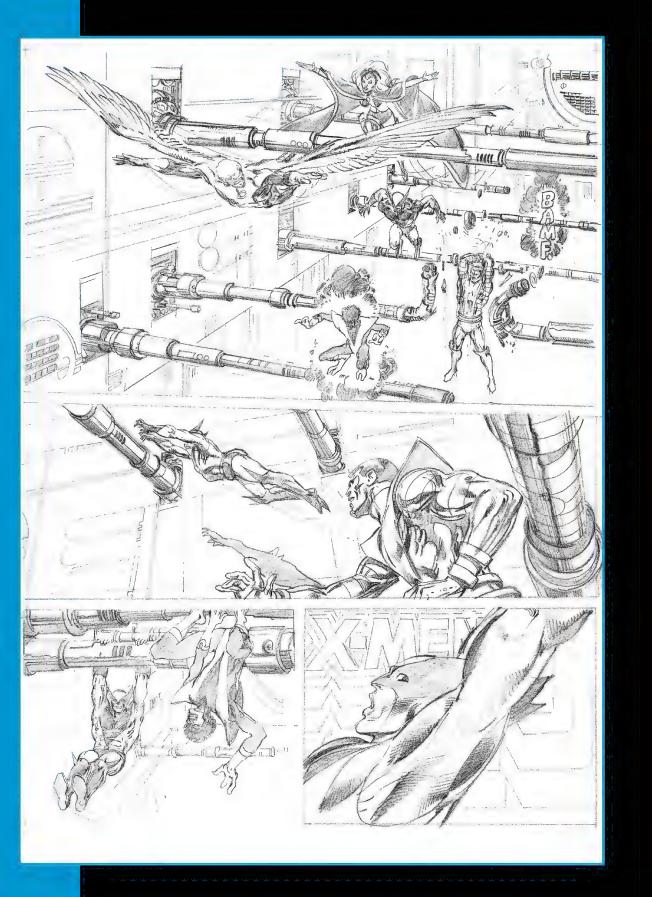


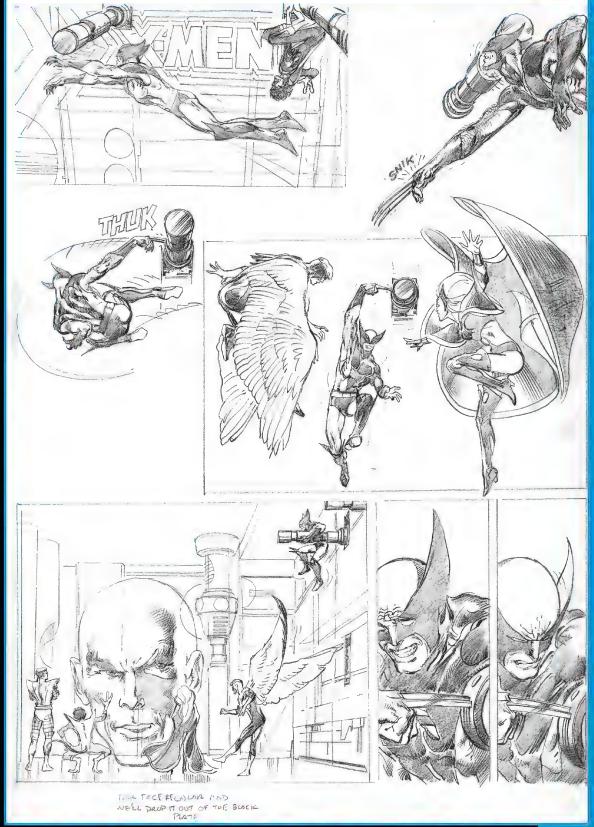
PRESENTED HERE ARE PENCILS OF THOSE PAGES COURTESY.

OF THE ARTIST.









INSIDE CHRIS CLAREMONT'S VISION OF THE ULTIMATE X-MEN STORY

The legendary X-Men writer discusses the influential, evergreen story of God Loves, Man Kills

By John Rhett Thomas

ver since the "All-New, All-Different" X-Men broke in 1975, it has earned a diverse group of fans, many of which have remained intensely loyal through the years. And for each one of these fans, there is that one, special story that stands out above the others, the one that means more to them than any other. For some it may be the "Dark Phoenix Saga," one of the acknowledged classics of all comic history, for others it might be "Days of Future Past," the dystopian nightmare that found the X-Men's future haunted by the menace of the Sentinels. For this writer, it's the "Brood Saga," that cosmic opera that saw the X-Men head into outer space and face an insidious foe that put their very souls under siege. But really, the list goes on and on, as do the many fine artists who put pencil to paper and brought visual life to these tales.

Of course, at the root of all these great stories is the writer Chris Claremont, the patron saint of X-Fandom. We have no way of looking back on history with any sort of accuracy, but it seems safe to suggest that without Claremont, there is no catalyst for what would become a comics phenomenon like no other. It could be said that Stan Lee, Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko built Marvel with the Silver Age of Comics, but the rise of the Mutant Universe, with Claremont the prime mover behind it all, was the thing that cemented Marvel Comics in prominence for keeps.



WHEN THE QUESTION OF "FAVORITE X-MEN STORY?" IS TURNED TOWARDS THE MASTER planner of said Mutant Universe, by all indicators it would be this one you hold in your hands, God Loves, Man Kills. As revealed by Claremont in the following interview, this story was as highconcept as they come, purposely designed to be unbound by rules and also to make a statement. It was, as he says, their attempt at a big, blockbuster X-Men story to stand above all that had come before and influence all that would come after. That it also wound up to be a sizable portion of his fan base's favorite X-Men story of all time - including a certain X-Men film director - should go without saying, for by now you know that God Loves, Man Kills has entered the lexicon as just what its creator planned - a classic story, by a classic writer.

JOHN: Was the genesis of this story something you wanted to do in the regular X-Men series but maybe realized it didn't work there and decided to do it as a graphic novel, or was the story developed with the intent of being used in the graphic novel format?

CHRIS: Marvel had just started to embark on the graphic novel program. The graphic novel division was sort of split between original creator-owned material and Marvel-owned JOHN: You had intended to create an evergreen material. They wanted to go with big guns up front. We were on the list. What happened was that a couple of books ahead of us didn't get and afterwards, and this is obviously what has produced as rapidly or as effectively as had been anticipated (which is also how the New Mutants got in there unexpectedly.) We were actually approached and asked, as I recall, if we could move God Loves, Man Kills up in the schedule and Weezie [editor Louise Simonson] and I both felt that this was a story that shouldn't be slap dashed. We wanted to make sure it was the best possible story, art and production that we could come up with because we felt that it was a significant thing. This story was what we felt we were not able to do within the regular run of the book, which was if you only had one opportunity to tell a story about the X-Men that would encapsulate the concept, the morals, the struggle, the emotional and physical realities of the book, what would it be?

JOHN: And so the graphic novel format was really a very attractive vehicle to do that one, definitive X-Men story in a big way.

CHRIS: We felt it was at that time, yeah. I mean, we were making it up as we went along. One thing that we felt was we wanted it to stand alongside the European and Japanese versions of graphic productions. You know, this is our shot at the big time. And we wanted something that would be special. A story that we could tell in this format, in this venue, that we couldn't do in a regular comic, that we did not feel was right in the regular run of the book. In those days, this was our \$5-million dollar movie. Now it would be \$105 million!

JOHN: Right! (Laughter.)

CHRIS: We wanted something that would read as good, we hoped, in 5 years if not 20, as it did in that day. And goodness knows, we seemed to have pulled it off.

story with this book that would act as an anchor for all the stories that came before happened. But I'm curious if there was any nervousness at the time about taking a very popular franchise that was getting even more popular, and making some courageous choices involving intense dialogue and graphic and violent imagery that was maybe pushing the envelope. Was there a little nervousness about doing that with these particular characters at this particular time?

CHRIS: Not really. We were just telling a good story. Our confidence was that if we had a good story the characters would take care of themselves. We wanted to make our point — our emotional points, our moral points; in an ideal sense we wanted to have a sense of completion and yet also leave the reader going, "Oh God! What the hell's happened? What next? Where do they go from here?" We wanted them desperate to come back for more.

JOHN: One thing that I wanted to clear up—and this is a question from when I was a twelveyear-old kid reading this for the first timesince this graphic novel wasn't the regular X-Men comic, was this story taking place in the regular X-Men continuity?

CHRIS: No. In terms of continuity we used the X-Men who were existing at that time and in the appearance they had at that point. Therefore Kitty's part of the team, Illyana's there, Salem

Center's there, Stevie Hunter's there. That said, there was no attempt to integrate it into the ongoing action continuity of the monthly series. Again, the guiding concept of God Loves, Man Kills was, it is a portrait of a specific era, i.e., 1982, but the things we were doing with Magneto, with Xavier, with the team, were solo unto itself. Stryker was never supposed to be utilized again. He was unique unto the graphic novel. He had a beginning, he had a middle, he had an end. Period. It was supposed to be a stand-alone. It was never supposed to be absorbed into and subsumed by the monthly cavalcade that came before and has come afterwards because it was always meant to be a unique and special thing. This was in our mind,

Weezie's and mine-and I hope Brent's—a relatively unique event and a special event and any attempt to spin off from there would have just diminished it.

JOHN: One of the main features of the book was Stryker. He was the "immoral" core of the book, let's say.

CHRIS: I wouldn't say immoral at all. From Stryker's perspective he was an immensely moral and even to some measure conflicted character. That was, I think, part of what made the story powerful: none of the characters fall into, I hope, a clichéd model. There was a path Stryker took to the man he is and the actions he committed—as there was for the X-Men. And they all had to try and find a way to deal with it.

And again, the final moral conflict is between this man of God and this child, Kitty, and Scott

is the one who basically has the impassioned confrontation. And the paradox is that Xavier is the one who is committing the horrible acts. as he did in X-Men 2 and Magneto is the one who's trying to save him. We were trying to burst all the bubbles and present everyone in a textural light that provided the reader with a measure of insight into them. The goal was that there would be no stock characters. There would be no stock heroes. No stock villains. That a reader could find a way to emphasize with Stryker on some level as they could with Charlie and Magneto on some level, to understand why they came to this point in their lives and why they're doing what they're doing. And hopefully learn something from it.

"WE WANTED SOMETHING THAT WOULD READ AS GOOD, WE HOPED, IN 5 YEARS IF NOT 20. AS IT DID IN THAT DAY."

JOHN: Many of your characters are very sympathetic role models as people of faith, you know Nightcrawler, Kitty Pryde, Rahne Sinclair. It's not something one sees too often anymore, especially with newer characters. So you created these role models that lived their lives of faith out in the open and were positive and at the same time, you could be pretty tough on organized religion through characters like Stryker, showing the sort of stridency and danger that can come from fundamentalism. What went into those kinds of characterizations for you as a writer?



CHRIS: Well, in terms of Stryker, it was basically me spending six months traveling through the United States, going to conventions and what have you, and taking the time to watch Sunday religious programming. There was a considerable difference between the faith and the presentation of the faith, and what the Bible actually says versus an interpretation that's put on it by certain people: these might be two different things. And that the stridency and the passion and, to a certain extent, the rage that some of these gentlemen of faith felt towards those who were not of their various persuasion - and this applies whether you're talking Protestant or Catholic or Judaism or Islam or whatever.

I wanted to show that just because Nightcrawler is strange-looking, that doesn't mean that the faith he feels is any less true or any less impassioned than what Stryker feels-and in Kitty's case, I wanted to show the primal example of "the child shall lead them." And then again you have someone like Colossus and Illyana who have, from that perspective, no faith at all. They are from an atheistic society, the former Soviet Union.

The nice thing about the X-Men is that they cover a vast number of bases — at least they did in those days. And this is, like it or not, supposed to be a pluralistic society where we are mature enough to share the space, the political, the social space with a number of different and perhaps even contradictory beliefs and views. And the hope was that we would tell a story that wouldn't need to be told 20 years later or be looked upon as an anachronism, and unfortunately it's become more relevant than ever.

that made me sit up in my chair when reading the graphic novel was the frank use of the racial epithet "nigger" when Kitty was having her showdown with Stevie Hunter. At the time, obviously, that was a bold word choice. Do you think if you had to do God Loves, Man Kills today that you could make the same bold choice?

CHRIS: I could make it, but whether it could be published as is, I don't know.

JOHN: Right.

CHRIS: The point is, language has power. Use of language is an expression of power. Rap music



had not taken off to the passionate extent it has over the subsequent ten or fifteen years. The airwaves were not as, for lack of a better word, corrupted by language as they have become over the last fifteen years. You turn on a series on FX now and poor old George Carlin's seven deadly words are part of the average stock in trade. So I guess things change. But the idea was at that time, as a writer and an editor and a publisher at that place speaking to our audience—which I have to say, we suspected was predominantly white—we wanted to make a point. And we wanted to make a point about words and about pain. Hurting people. And it isn't a matter of punching someone in the JOHN: One of the things I wanted to mention nose. "How would you feel if he said this, Stevie, would you have been so tolerant then?" And that's a student talking to the teacher. That's a young, white Jewish kid talking to her black role model. And there's no answer to it. because from my experience and my youth, my reality, that was an insult, an obscenity. It was the kind of word that started fights. It wasn't the subject of rap music.

> We were trying to deal with primal stuff in a primal way and God was on one side and the language was on the other. And we wanted to bring it home in terms that our audience would understand on a visceral level, and Jim Shooter, to his credit, let us do it. We wanted

JOHN: One of the other interesting things I noted was in the initial debate between Charles and Stryker, where Stryker asks the question of Xavier, "These individuals of yours possess some pretty terrifying powers. How are we common folk to defend ourselves against them?" And this is a question that was echoed in the movie X2. And it's a good question. How do you as Chris Claremont, a normal, human guy, grapple with that question?

CHRIS: The hope I would have is that as we are all human, as we all live on this one world, as we all are mortal, you hope that there is a level on which we can live together. Being neighbors as friends is better than being neighbors as

You have to understand within the context that (at that time) we were barely a decade out of Vietnam. We were still in the middle of the nuclear age. You had to have lived through the Cuban missile crisis. There is something about sitting in class and suddenly hearing an air raid siren go off, and the teacher saying, "This is a

"THE X-MEN, IN EFFECT, WERE LIVING, WALKING, TALKING **NUCLEAR WEAPONS. HOW DO YOU COME TO TERMS WITH THEM?"**

to tell a story in a way that could not be done in the regular book. There's a reason why God Loves was done as a graphic novel without the code seal. But unlike what generally seems to happen when creators are given new freedom to do stuff, we did not want to restrict ourselves to "Hey! We can do grown-up stuff here! Let's see some T&A!!!" Our feeling was, if you're going to do an adult story, it isn't a matter of nudity and cursing, it is a matter of concepts. It is matter of dealing with visions of people and of social realities that might be considered inappropriate in a standard comic book simply because the kids who read it might be too young and might draw the wrong impression from the story. They wouldn't get it. But at the same time, we also wanted to demonstrate how powerfully graphic storytelling could be used to convey concepts and stories in a way that people to a wide extent could understand and derive pleasure and learning from it.

drill. Everyone get under their desks." I didn't. I sat there. And the teacher came over and said, "Why aren't you under your desk?" And I said, "Why?" And she said, "This is an air raid drill." And me being a smart-assed hyper-educated twerp, I'm sitting there saying, "If the Russians dump a twenty-megaton thermonuclear device on the Empire State Building, the area of absolute destruction is a radius of twenty-five miles. We are thirty-one miles from the Empire State Building. We will be turned to ash. And if they miss and it lands in Queens, we're vaporized. So what's the point?" She was a good teacher, and she looked at me and said, "Yeah, and if it lands in New Jersey, what are you gonna do then?" So I ducked.

The flip side of it was that there was a Bowmark launch site two miles from where I went to school. There were five major airports near me, there was Grumman, there was McDonnell



"YOU PLAY THE HAND YOU'RE DEALT. AND IN OUR CASE WE WERE DEALT A DAMN FINE HAND, AND WE PLAYED TO WIN."

Douglas. There were the submarine pens up in New London. If the %\$*@ hit the fan, it wouldn't have been pretty. I lived under the nuclear umbrella and I read way too much. I knew what could happen and basically I was transferring all of that anxiety, hope, and realization into the comic. The X-Men, in effect, were living, walking, talking nuclear weapons. How do you come to terms with them?

The key in those instances is to remember you were talking from a global standpoint of maybe thirty or forty mutants, good and bad, out of a world population of three or four billion. You're not talking about the mutant environment that exists today where it seems like it's every other

kid down the street. Now, the cliché is that they're no more fearsome as a concept than traffic on a freeway. You're used to it because there are so many of them. The conceptual idea in those days was that you've got this couple dozen characters who could destroy the world, and you don't know who they are. That's scary, that's special.

So, again, to state that just because they're strange, that doesn't make them any less human; in some ways it might make them more human — Nightcrawler being the most extreme example. The most outrageous-looking of the cast, he is the most traditional and human in his beliefs, in his character. He is the one who is *most* like us, except that he isn't. And you build up from there.

JOHN: The other point that was made in his little speech, and this made me chuckle, was when he said, "Ever-increasing numbers of mutants pose a clear and present danger both to the United States and to the socio-political order of the world as we know it." Which is entirely the basis of the last several years of *X-Men* stories.

CHRIS: Well, you could claim that was the foundation of Grant's vision of the X-Men when he did his run. Of course. You know, but one of the virtues of being the first is that no one's done it before. I was building the tropes as I went along, you know? But that is the essence of it: they are a clear and present danger. And if they are a clear and present danger when there's only ten of them, what do you do when it's ten thousand, what do you do when it's a hundred thousand? What do you do if you

suddenly wake up and Russia has three million, China has three million and we don't? You know, how do you deal with it? How do you make friends? Do you go gently into that good night, or what?

JOHN: Those kinds of themes inevitably add a very human, relatable element to understanding the existential crisis between mutants and humans.

CHRIS: The other point behind the conceptual approach to *God Loves* as opposed to the *X-Men* series was that it wasn't meant to be about characters in skin types. It wasn't meant to be about SUPER HERO VERSUS SUPER-VILLAIN! That's why the final dramatic action of the book is a human police officer pulling his trigger.

JOHN: That's right. Magneto's rescue in the end was by one of New York's finest. As the climax of the book picks up steam, you see these average cops grow slowly from your basic bystanders into the pivotal roles that decisively end the story.

CHRIS: Right. And what it's saying is that we are all part of the global community. We are all part of this society. We all have a stake in making things work. The X-Men have a role. Magneto, if he chooses to, has a positive role. The police officer has a role. We can all accomplish a positive result if we cast aside our prejudice and work together. That there is good and there is evil and Stryker, for all of his stated belief in good, turns against his strongest acolyte upon the discovery that she is a mutant and doesn't care that he may kill innocent people, that he may kill millions. It is for him a necessary price to pay to bring about the proper end, the right and final solution. And that a human, a non-powered character sworn to uphold the law (and the most primal part of that law being "Thou shalt not kill"), is the one to stop him. And he doesn't stop him by killing him. He stops him by shooting him, yes, but not by killing him.

JOHN: I have a question about the Stryker characterization, about how he murdered his wife, murdered the child.

CHRIS: He doesn't see it that way. He's a combat veteran. He's a master sergeant or a sergeant major. His wife gives birth to a mutant and it evidently was not a pretty mutant. And there was no support group. You're in the

middle of the southwest and suddenly you find yourself cast into this nightmarish situation, and his response was a soldier's response. Not the right one, and certainly not one that you would want a soldier to do. But he responded primally.

JOHN: That interlude seemed to have an Old Testament, Biblical texture to it. Was that something you were inspired by?

CHRIS: It was in there by accident. We wanted to make our points on very primal, very serious levels, and that's the foundation of the entire situation. There's a fundamental reason why the whole Stryker situation became the foundation of the X2 film, and why that one of the three films is the most powerful and most memorable, because it's dealing with primal conflicts on a primal level. It's a shame that Bryan went on to do Superman and didn't do X3 because that would have been fascinating to see where he would have evolved and taken the trilogy. And it would've been a lot nicer to end the X-Men trilogy with the same sort of panache and power and passion with which, say, the Bourne trilogy ended. Not to say that X3 was bad, but it would've been nice to see what Bryan was gonna do next?

JOHN: What are your impressions of the movie overall?

CHRIS: Oh, it was brilliant.

JOHN: Did you talk with Bryan at all about the movie at any time?

CHRIS: We talked, but it was his creative vision. I wrote the novelization for the film, so there was certainly a measure of interaction. But this was his expression of his vision. It's apples and oranges, I'm afraid.

JOHN: Right, but as far as movie adaptations go, you were very proud to see that translation.

CHRIS: Oh yeah. It is a very good movie, on a whole lot of levels, I think.

JOHN: What was the working relationship like with your editor, Louise Simonson?

CHRIS: She did what every writer wants from an editor, which is to help the writer focus in on the essential story that the writer is trying to tell and pare it down to its essence. So there

is very little dross. Yes, we could have done this for another hundred pages. I could have thrown in everything including the kitchen sink, but the key is to focus it down to the essential story and then tell that story as clearly and eloquently as it is possible to do. And you know, you could not ask for more and you could not have found a better editor or collaborator.

JOHN: I'd like to get your comments on the art of Brent Anderson in regard to this graphic novel, but also, he worked with you on three issues of *Uncanny X-Men*. What did you think of him as a collaborator on the X-Men?

CHRIS: I think the art speaks for itself both in terms of quality and eloquence. It tells the story with passion and clarity. You know, it looks frightening - like the real world. It has visual humor, it has visual excitement. As with every X-Men story, the scary thing was how do you get all these bloody characters into the panel simultaneously? Unlike today, where essentially a lot of group books turn into a succession of single character panels, he was using all of the actors in the frame. It was a joy. We were bouncing from past to present, from reality to fantasy, from Salem Center to New York City.

JOHN: He struck me as someone who could have really been a good artist on a more consistent basis for the X-Men.

CHRIS: Yes, but instead he went off and created his own series and did it quite well. The X-Men is a very hard nut to crack, and always has been. At least, I should say, in my

experience with it. You're not just dealing with a group, you're dealing with a group of heroes and a group of villains and a context and a city and God knows what else and there's more stuff going on than you know what to do with and how the hell are you gonna fit everybody in a panel and "I'm not George Perez, how do I do this?!?!" (Laughter.) You know, the challenge with the X-Men has always been that they are a group, they are a family, they are a

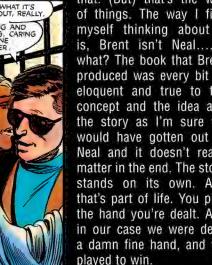
multitude of people interacting. Not from one panel to the next, but within a panel. You've got to be able to draw more than one person, and more importantly, because of the density of the stories, inevitably you're dealing with multiple characters in God help us, five, six, seven panel pages. Try it sometimes, it's fun. (Laughter.)

And when you're dealing with characters as physically disparate as Colossus and Nightcrawler....Oy! You know, not to mention Storm, because you need to give her a sense of flight, of space. And not to mention that in terms of the X-Men you're dealing with, at least in those days, you were dealing with a multitude of ethnic characters, so you had to be able to draw a variety of people. And in God Loves, more than most, you did not have the luxury of being able to invent a fictitious reality. This story is set in the real world. You've got the school, okay that you can fake; Salem Center, a little harder; oh, and New York! We're not going to the Shi'Ar system. We're not going to the Savage Land. We're not going to Ouwagodugu or whatever; it is Manhattan. It is Manhattan in 1982 and it's gotta look like it. They're not driving a super-jet, they're driving a Rolls Royce. These are real people. Kitty is running for her life through the South Bronx and its gotta look the South Bronx. It's reality, what a concept.

Neal Adams did this wonderful six-page sequence of Magneto running through a construction site, throwing giant cranes and earthmovers at those who are chasing after him and it was wonderful and then he got into some sort of dispute with Marvel and that was

that. (But) that's the way of things. The way I find myself thinking about it is, Brent isn't Neal....so what? The book that Brent produced was every bit as eloquent and true to the concept and the idea and the story as I'm sure we would have gotten out of Neal and it doesn't really matter in the end. The story stands on its own. And that's part of life. You play the hand you're dealt. And in our case we were dealt a damn fine hand, and we







YOU HAVE TO MAKE

NEAL ADAMS AND GOD LOVES, MAN KILLS

X-Men Visionary Neal Adams
Explains Why He Walked Away
From The Biggest X-Men Story
Ever Told

BY JOHN RHETT THOMAS

IT'S 1982 AND YOU ARE LIKE virtually every other comic fan of the time. You're a fan of the X-Men, the group of Marvel mutants that have evolved rapidly from a nondescript relaunch, to a cult item beloved by discriminating fans, to surging popularity across all of fandom, to status as the most popular comic title of the day. And now, the newest format in comics, the Marvel Graphic Novel, has hit stands, promising to tell the biggest, best X-Men story that has ever been told. You head down to your local comic shop, plunk down your \$5.95, and then head quickly home, ready to settle in for some good reading...

Magneto, once the hunter, is now the hunted. He races through a warehouse, looking for anything he can use to defend himself, to stay alive. But his pursuers are relentless. They seem to have armaments of their own that not only equal their quarry's awesome magnetic powers, but one-up them with their brutal lethality. The shots are fired, and Magneto is felled...possibly for good. A psychic alarm barges its way into the brain of Charles Xavier, the harrowing, uncertain fate of his longtime friend/foe causing a flash of momentarily intense pain. The response comes instantly, perhaps by reflex: "X-Men! To me, my X-Men!" The call goes out to his brash cadre of students, and a story is born...

Except...this is a story that never happened. This exciting action scene, spelled out by the six pages drawn by legendary X-Men artist Neal Adams, would have to stand as his sole testament to the story that would later become *God Loves, Man Kills*. When the idea was put forth to tell the biggest X-Men tale to ever be told, a planned evergreen story that would draw on 20 years worth of the X-Men legacy and define it for the future, it seemed there was only one artist that could merit billing in the credits of such a book, but it was an artist who hadn't worked for Marvel for over a decade.

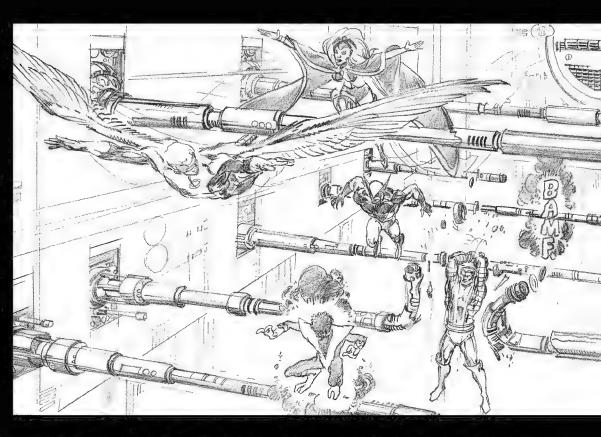
After teasing Marvel Comics fans in the late '60s with his groundbreaking talents in a small handful of books (X-Men, Avengers), he disembarked for DC Comics to make his biggest statements in the pages of Deadman, Green Lantern/Green Arrow, and perhaps most importantly, Batman. He would later leave DC Comics and not return for a particular reason that would have a bearing on his invitation to return to Marvel to draw God Loves, Man Kills. "Jim Shooter asked me If I would do a special project," says Adams. "I told him that I wasn't doing anything for DC Comics because I was sort of 'on strike' against the work made for hire provision of the law. I said I could do something for Marvel If it wasn't work "made for hire." Jim said he didn't think that would be a problem, he was sure he could get it taken care of I said, 'If you can do that, I'll be glad to do it. If you can give me reassurance that's the case." On top of this reassurance, Adams was given an outline of the story. While tolling away on some preliminary pages based on the outline, Adams considered the matter of work for hire status on its way to being taken care of according to his conditions.

But what is it about work for hire that unnerved the artist? "If you sign a work made for hire contract, you're signing a contract that says you're essentially a temporary employee, which is really not what you are," says Adams. Citing several examples of what he considers to be important distinctions between what a temporary employee is and a freelance employee is, Adams feels strongly that the work for hire contract system puts comic creators at a disadvantage to their employers. "Essentially (as a comic creator), you're a freelance contractor, and that's what this business should be about."

His good feelings about continuing the job were challenged when, despite the initial reassurances, he was delivered a contractual agreement that said "Work Made For Hire." This rankled Adams and caused him to consider both the ethics of his situation and the ramifications of his decision to either guit or continue. Reflecting on this situation, Neal says, "I'm sure that when the promise was made, it was a hopeful promise, one of those promises that turn out to be 'I'm sure I can take care of it, but guess what! Those legal eagles got involved and said we can't do that because it'll set a dangerous legal precedent If we grant some freedom and equality to a freelancer. It'll spread like an infection and we don't want that to happen!" With the only thing left to do being the signing of the contract, Neal framed his options thusly. "Would I take the bit between my teeth and say, 'No, I'm not going to do this?' Or would I say, 'It really doesn't matter to me. I know I have to be a realist under certain circumstances, and after all I've already started to do the story?"

In the end, and in the face of building excitement over a fun, new project, Adams took the bit between the teeth and made the hard call. "I said to myself, 'Mmmmm...no, Neal. The fact that you've already started to do the story should be the last reason why you should continue. What you're doing is giving yourself an excuse.' Although I've signed work made for hire agreements afterwards, since I only agreed to do this under the basis that it would not be such an agreement, I could not continue."

For Adams, this was a simple matter of ethics. Ascribing no nefarious intent to the one who made the promise, the matter still resolved itself based on what his sense of right and wrong told him. "It's not that you have to be

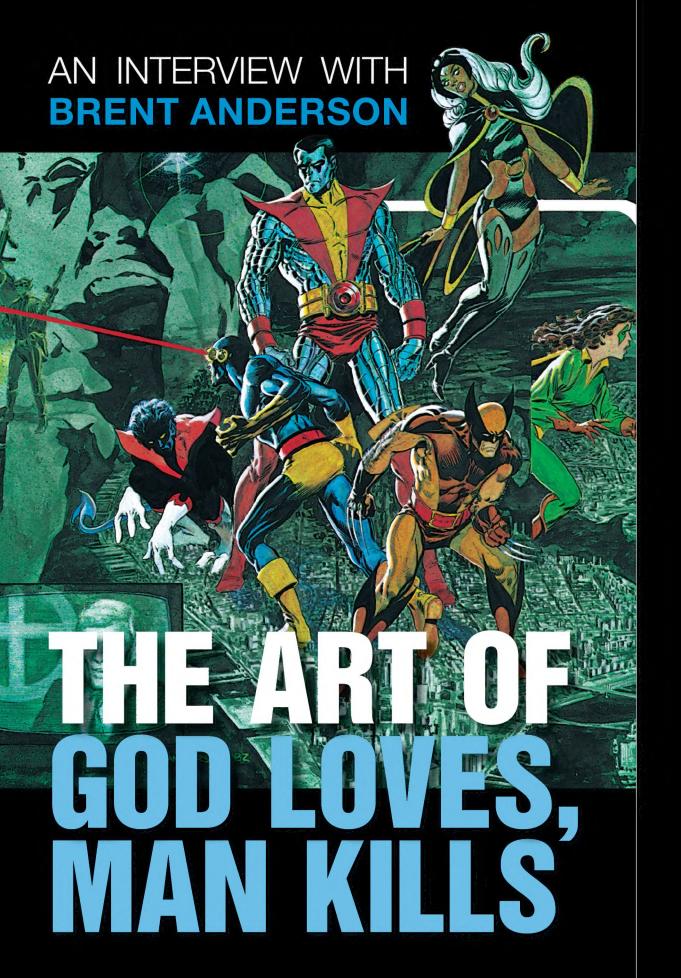


such a jerk about all these things that people pretend to believe in, but there's a certain point where somebody says something and it doesn't turn out that way, and you have to decide what you're going to do. So I had to decide, well, here's the sacrifice I have to make." Not wanting to regret putting his feelings about work made for hire in the backseat and what it would mean to him and his fellow freelancers, he shut down his contribution to the project.

But not without some personal disappointment. As the pages he did manage to complete show, Adams was producing some art that was startlingly fresh — despite not having drawn the X-Men in years and also having to contend with many new characters. "If you look at the pages, I was clearly having a good time. I think it would have been a good project, and I think I would have done it justice." In fact, part of his enthusiasm for doing the project was the lure of drawing the new characters, particularly the stocky, smallish Canadian dynamo currently emerging as one of Marvel's most popular characters. "I really wanted to do Wolverine. You can tell by the drawings I did that, yeah, that would have been fun for me," says Adams, with a wistful air to his voice. "But...there you go. I got to give the X-Men a pretty good kickstart back when I was doing it."

Summing up his feelings about this singular moment in his long contribution to comic art, Neal chuckles, "It's just too bad when things like that happen. But you have to make your stand. A man has to know his limitations, what things he will do and won't do. And that pushed me just a little bit too far. Not a good thing to do to Neal!"

Despite the rancor that may have existed then, it didn't rub off on his appreciation for the graphic novel that eventually came of the project he walked away from. Asked about his regard for the work of Brent Anderson in God Loves, Man Kills, Adams gives a very positive response, despite acknowledging that his work would have been quite different. "It seems like such a different thing. It's interesting how different an approach one artist would take from another. I didn't see it in any way like Brent saw it. I was very pleased to see what he did, it just didn't resemble what I would have done. I don't say that in a negative way - I think he did a terrific job. I think it's a great example of what happens when one artist does a job and another artist does a job, and sometimes they're not even recognizable from one another. It's interesting, isn't it?"



A NEW ARTIST PINCH-HITS FOR A LEGEND AND TURNS IN THE ART OF A LIFETIME

BY JOHN RHETT THOMAS

fter Neal Adams left the X-Men graphic novel project in its earliest stages, Chris Claremont turned to a young artist named Brent Anderson to follow through with the visual side of his blockbuster story. At the time, Anderson wasn't the first name that rolled off the tongue when the roll call of X-Men artists was announced: those names would have appropriately been either Dave Cockrum or John Byrne, the current masters of mutant delineations, or the aforementioned Neal Adams, whose epic vision of the group from the late '60s still had a solid hold on the wistful imaginations of X-Men fans.

But Anderson wasn't exactly a stranger to the X-Men, either. He had joined the X-Men artist fraternity in the early '80s with a trio of sterling stories. The first, Uncanny X-Men #144, was a Cyclops solo story meant to bridge the gap between the conclusion of Byrne's popular run and the return to the book of original "All-New, All-Different" X-Men stylist Cockrum. If the green artist felt any trepidation when putting his art out there between issues of acknowledged X-Men greats, it didn't show in his work. Cyclops' brutal battle with the fear-mongering D'Spayre, all while the macabre Man-Thing shambled in the background, was as visually arresting as any other X-Men art of the time. As well, the murky landscapes of the Everglades swamps and the villainous D'Spayre's hideous visions were gorgeously rendered by Anderson's evocative pencils.

His next issue was the double-sized *X-Men Annual #5*, featuring Xavier's mutants in a team-up with the artist's favorite characters of all time, the Fantastic Four. Anderson was able to showcase his flair for high adventure delivered Marvel style, as the X-Men and Sue Storm barnstormed through Arkon's kingdom to free the imprisoned FF from the clutches of the evil Badoon. His final dance with the X-Men occurred in the classic *Uncanny X-Men #160*, in which Belasco, a demonic character he co-created with writer Bruce Jones in the pages of *Ka-Zar*, showed up to menace the X-Men by kidnapping Colossus' young sister, Illyana Rasputin, setting the stage for her emergence as the fan-favorite character Magik.

As Anderson reveals in this interview about his time drawing the *God Loves, Man Kills* graphic novel, this period was a time of artistic searching for him: looking for a style, an artistic vision to call his own after years of learning from — and styling himself after — masters of the medium like Neal Adams and John Buscema. But having the right influences is half the battle won for a comic artist just starting to learn his craft; he also had the confidence of his peers after proving himself on *X-Men* with that small handful of issues. This, combined with his eagerness to explore the possibilities of the new graphic novel format, made him the perfect replacement for Adams.

JOHN: Neal Adams was the original scheduled artist for the graphic novel, but things didn't quite work out with him continuing on with the book. When did you find out that you were going to be the guy to draw God Loves, Man Kills?

BRENT: Chris came to me when I was finishing up my run on Ka-Zar. I was frustrated that I was unable to hit the deadlines for that book, doing the kind of work I like to do — the better-drawn work, in my opinion — and that was almost exactly the same time Dave Cockrum had put in his notice on the X-Men. So I went into Weezie's office (Editor Louise Simonson) and I was complaining, "Oh, God I can't do good enough work!" and stuff like that. I told her that I had to leave Ka-Zar and start doing some one-shots or something. And then she said, "Oh, that's too bad because Dave Cockrum just left X-Men and Chris and I wanted to know if you wanted to pick it up!" And I said, "What?! I came in here to guit Ka-Zar because I didn't think I could draw the main characters well enough and now you're telling me you want me to draw the X-Men?!?! They have seven main characters, I just can't do that amount of work." And she said, "Well I think your quality is fine and you're doing a great job but it's up to you."

So then Chris came in the office and he said, "I heard you turned down my X-Men book." He said he had a graphic novel he was supposed to do and Neal Adams couldn't do it for whatever reasons and he asked if I wanted to do it and I said, "Perfect!" It's the X-Men, it's a one-shot, I get to take my time on it, it would be part of their graphic novel group, which would have that nice paper with that Marvel color that Steve Oliff had developed, that gray line Marvel color. And I thought, man this great. I get to pencil, ink and color it — or supervise the color by hiring whomever I wanted to color it, and I got Steve Oliff. So it was a dream project.

JOHN: Obviously with such a new and innovative format, the art techniques were going to require some new innovations as well. Can you take us inside the technical aspects of what Steve Oliff brought to the coloring and what you were able to do with that?

the gray-line stats that Steve was coloring on, you could do the coloring as a surprint and then print the black plate over the top of it, and by taking out elements in the black plate

which were printed on the gray-line underneath and covered over with color, you could get a painted quality over and above the ink work. So we experimented with some scratch-through, scratching through an area to make the blackline fade out so you could see the color of it underneath. There were all kinds of interesting things that Steve did with that, and he was using animator's cell paint. The cell paint would resist itself with different colors.

There was one panel where Storm is conjuring up clouds for a storm effect and Steve just literally took the colors blue, white and a little gray and sort of squeezed them on to the thing and moved them around so they swirled and looked like cloud formations or something. Really, really nice effects! So there were some nice opportunities to really pull out all the stops and see how well I could draw this thing.

And since I was penciling and inking it, I did the first three-page sample twice-up, meaning it was at 200%. At the time they were trying to wean people off that method because they couldn't gang up the original art on the camera board they shoot the film on and it would wind up costing more money because they couldn't shoot as many pages. So Jim Shooter convinced me to go down to one and a half. and since you can still get the detail you want to get in there, I said okay. I'm kind of glad I did because the detailed pages, the sequences that were twice-up like the gang scene, I just loved drawing them but when they got reduced down they got a little muddy. Steve held them together with the color, but I was glad to go to one and a half.

JOHN: So when you came on to draw this, how long of a lead time did you have?

BRENT: At that time I had never done anything as elaborate. I had never penciled and inked my own work. It was long, something like 63 pages of art, and three of those pages were painted (I did monochrome painting on the sequence with the flashbacks featuring Stryker in the army). I actually got to paint three of the pages, penciling and inking the pages and supervising the color and all that. I didn't know how long it would take but I remember at the BRENT: It was definitely more painterly. Over time [Editor-In-Chief Jim] Shooter had instigated a bonus for work that came in on time or ahead of time. If it came in ahead of time, I think you got something like \$1,000. If it came on your deadline, you got a \$500 bonus. I was

shooting for the \$1,000. I don't think I ever got it! (Laughter.) I remember I made the deadline, but at one point towards the end of the book. I was thinking the book really should have been about 90 pages, not 63, just for the pacing, because there were so many panels.

Chris tends to write heavy, but he's good at it. I used to give him a hard time about crowding up my drawing with stupid words! (Laughter.) But he agreed too, it should have been 90 pages. but Marvel wasn't going to pay for 90 pages of content before the book came out. I think I had three-and-a-half months to produce the black and white art, and then Steve was brought in to color it, so I think the overall project was about five months long.

JOHN: God Loves, Man Kills was not going to be just any X-Men story. It was meant to be a big deal, the most defining, high-concept X-Men story that could be told. Did you get that sense as well, that there was a lot riding on getting this right?

together, do you think Marvel felt like this was a good X-Men story to put out in the graphic novel format?

BRENT: Yep, everyone was pretty happy with it. In fact, one of the guys in the intern department saw the first pages with the gang [pages 37-38] and he said, "Man these pages are great! I grew up with these guys, man. I know these guys, and you got 'em!" I don't think he really meant he knew the guys specifically, but he said he grew up with guys like that and I managed to capture them.

JOHN: Are there any sequences in the book that really stand out to you as ones that you feel really represent the book at its best?

BRENT: There were actually two scenes, one where Nightcrawler bamfs into the back of Stryker's limousine, then bamfs him out by the neck and he's choking him with his tail. He brings him up to his fanged face and he's trying to scare him, he's trying to scare the #&*@ out of him, and in that scene I really tried BRENT: Yeah, Chris sort of emphasized that to emphasize the horrifying nature of what's

going on: here is this good-hearted character with demonic features who is using his features to try to intimidate the evil guy. It's just a horrific moment, And I

got flashes of that in the X-Men movie, when Nightcrawler bamfs into the White House and is attacking the president. I think (X2 director) Brian Singer liked that scene too.

And then the other scene was kind of a goof-up that I made. It was at the end of the story, in the scene at Madison Square Garden where the

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from the beginning and as we got into it he said he was glad that I was doing it, because if Neal had done it, it would be a far different book. He was going to play to what were Neal's strengths, and what he was doing with me was playing to what he felt were my strengths. He kept emphasizing that he thought this was a big thing. I was still callow and I was just try-

ing to comprehend what Chris was talking about: all I ever want to do is enhance the creator's vision when I'm working or collaborating with a writer. I want to do whatever I can to illustrate the content and the meaning, and as the pages would get done he would call me up and say, "I just saw the new pages and they're great!" He was thrilled the whole way.

JOHN: So he was happy and you were happy as it went along, but when the graphic novel came









X-Men come out onstage to denounce Stryker, and Stryker is trying to keep his audience in his thrall, and he says, "These are not human!" Then he points to Nightcrawler and he says, "Is that human?" And Nightcrawler doesn't have a tail! The tail that almost choked the life out of the guy is not there and no one noticed for a long, long time! And then when I noticed it, I said, "Oh my God." And people hadn't told me for years.

JOHN: If they don't know it, they're going to know it now! (*Laughter*.)

BRENT: That was the other scene that was a favorite.

JOHN: I guess we can assume there is eligibility for a No-Prize on this one. What we ought to do, 25 years later in this deluxe, hardcover edition, is solicit No-Prize entries. I'm going to say Nightcrawler teleported his tail away for just a second. (*Laughter*.) That's my guess.

BRENT: If you look at it, his tail could be hanging down behind him. But what's the point of hiding it at that moment? (*Laughter.*) But the thing is, maybe that worked to its advantage, because unconsciously, people said, "Yeah, he's human! He's Nightcrawler! Don't be distracted by his forked tail. We know who the fuzzy elf is and you have no right to point at him and accuse him of not being human!" (*Laughter.*)

JOHN: You mentioned the X2 movie, and God Loves, Man Kills was a big influence on Singer's approach to the second film. How do you feel about that and how do you feel about the movie and how it used some of the storytelling elements of this graphic novel?

BRENT: Actually, with the fact that a good part of the movie Independence Day was inspired by Strikeforce: Morituri [Brent's cult classic series from the late '80s], and X2 was inspired by the graphic novel I had done, and I had wanted for years to make movies, I kind of feel that today I'm at least making the storyboards for movies, or the templates for movies! (Laughter.) It's quite gratifying. I actually bought a copy of the X-Men movie and watched it, and I saw inspiration from the graphic novel, but there were no literal lifts. I wouldn't expect that, anyway. Brian Singer is not me or

Chris; he is going to carry some of the themes from the comics that impressed him, but he's going to do it in a movie way. I actually like all the *X-Men* movies so far.

JOHN: 25 years later, do you think this is a high watermark for you in your career? Do you think you could have done a better job or are you content with the finished product of *God Loves, Man Kills*?

BRENT: I think it was my first real successful experiment in comic storytelling, where I sort of worked to come up with my own style. Prior to the graphic novel, I didn't feel like I had my own artistic style. I was an amalgam of John Buscema and Jack Kirby, Alex Raymond, and Hal Foster, all these influences I had that meant I really didn't have a style of my own. I think after *God Loves, Man Kills*, I found my look, my style.

From there I went on to Somerset Holmes. where basically I applied that to doing a Hitchcock film in comics form, and then to Strikeforce: Morituri where we did a whole different riff on super heroes. But I would say, ves. the X-Men graphic novel is a high watermark. And the fact that it has stayed in print virtually all these years and I kept getting royalty checks on the reprinting of the graphic novel — every year, every quarter, which meant they were constantly reprinting the graphic novel because it was in constant demand. Every three-and-ahalf years they would reprint that sucker and sell another 10,000- 12,000 copies because they were selling it to a whole new generation of X-Men fans who just had to have the graphic novel in their collection. I'm sure glad for that!

"IF A MAN BELIEVETH NOT, HE IS CONDEMNED ALREADY..."

The Uncanny X-Men. Magneto, master of magnetism. The bitterest of enemies for years. But now they must join forces against a new adversary who threatens them all and the entire world besides...in the name of God. The members of the Stryker Crusade are poised to cleanse the earth, no matter how much blood stains their hands. With Professor X as their enemy and Magneto as their ally, the X-Men undergo an apocalyptic ordeal ordained by a minister gone mad! One of Chris Claremont's most powerful and influential stories, the partial basis for X2 is reprinted here for the first time in years.



